

CUMBERLAND COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MARCH 4, 2010, 8:30AM, ROOM 564  
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Kenneth Edge  
Commissioner Marshall Faircloth

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Jeannette Council

OTHERS: James Martin, County Manager  
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager  
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager/Finance Director  
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney  
Sally Shutt, Communications Manager  
Marie Colgan, Clerk

Commissioner Edge called the meeting to order and advised that Commissioner Council was unable to attend the meeting.

1. Approve Minutes: January 7, 2010

MOTION: Commissioner Faircloth moved to approve.

SECOND: Commissioner Edge

VOTE: Unanimous

2. Discussion Regarding the Recommendations of the Public Safety Task Force

County Manager Martin advised that the reason for this item is to determine what direction the Committee wants to follow regarding the recent report from the Public Safety Task Force. Mr. Martin referred to page 1 of the report pointing out that the Task Force made several recommendations and the creation of a public safety sales tax is a long term funding solution recommendation, as well as developing a secondary funding mechanism to compensate for economic downturns which diminish sales tax revenues. Commissioner Edge questioned what a penny increase on the sales tax would result in and Mr. Martin stated that it depends on what it is subject to. The initial estimate of a quarter cent would generate around \$8M, with one cent creating about \$32M and a cent and a quarter generating \$48M. Another recommendation was to establish a Public Safety Commission and to require gradual implementation and attainment of nationally established standards for operating fire departments, both professional and volunteers. Mr. Martin stated that he believes they are meeting the national standards. A recommendation for communications was to immediately establish plans and standardized protocol for an all-encompassing combined communications center and a Consolidated Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), supporting all public safety agencies, to improve response times and increase responder safety.

Discussion ensued regarding the recommendation to establish a Public Safety Commission which would create processes and procedures to distribute performance and penalty funds, fund balances and other identified funds to initiate new technologies, procedures or system improvements. Mr. Martin stated he feels that the first thing that needs to be determined is how to address the increase in the service level among those departments that don't have as high a tax base as others. The Task Force believes that it would take increasing the five departments that are low wealth up to one and a quarter cents in order to bring them in line with all other districts. Commissioner Edge questioned how the current half cent is split and Mr. Martin responded that 60% goes to low wealth departments and 40% goes to the Fire Chief's Association. Unless a discussion is held on changing the split, any amount would be subject to the same split. Makeup of the recommended Commission was discussed as well as what actual authority they would have. Mr. Moorefield pointed out that based on what authority is requested, it might entail legislative approval along with the recommended public safety sales tax. Commissioner Edge suggested that this be a topic of discussion on the upcoming meeting with the Legislative Delegation. Discussion continued regarding implementing a funding formula. Mrs. Shutt reminded members that the Commission would be responsible for performance benchmarks which have penalties applied if not met. The Public Safety Task Force is still meeting monthly. Next steps would be to first deal with the low wealth department funding needs, obtain the Task Force's vision for the Public Safety Commission, talk with the Legislative delegation regarding the sales tax issue and at some time meet with all the municipalities. Another piece that will need to be looked at later is a facility to house the consolidation of all communications. Mrs. Shutt to make notes about these steps for discussion and clarification with the Public Safety Task Force at their next meeting.

The consensus of the committee members is to start working on the special fire district tax and the recommendation on the 60-40 split, seek more input from the Task Force regarding the makeup of the requested Commission, and determine what legislative action might be required. Mr. Moorefield to get with Mr. Martin regarding the legislative talking points. Mr. Martin and Commissioner King to discuss this at the next Mayor's Coalition meeting.

### 3. Other Matters of Concern

Mrs. Cannon presented a financial update and distributed a report with expenditures and revenues figures through January, 2010 which had been requested earlier to be presented on a monthly basis. Mrs. Cannon stated that the month of February should be closed by next week. On the comparison of expenditures this year to last year, Mrs. Cannon stated that the county is on target with 56% expended/obligated encumbrances. No major trends are noted either way. On the revenue summary, it shows the county is slightly ahead as far as the percentages and called attention to the Ad Valorem Tax figures which relates to the difference in the projected revenue rate and revenue neutral putting the county ahead in revenue collections. The Sales Tax is

still underperforming based on budget projections which will result in about \$2M under budget. Interest income is still projected to fall short about \$750,000. However, based on how revenues and expenditures are running, it is expected that the county will still be about \$300,000 ahead in revenues above expenditures. There has been no major change in the financial picture since the December report or January report to the Commissioners. Mrs. Cannon stated that she has provided Mrs. Colgan with the details on this report in case anyone wants to review it in further detail. Commissioner Edge voiced his concern regarding the loss of ABC revenues and questioned how the Manager would reflect this in his recommended budget. Mr. Martin advised that he would continue to budget with the understanding that those funds may not continue to come to the county.

Mr. Martin provided an update to the Child Support Enforcement issue informing members that he is working on a dual track (1) he had a meeting this week with the representative from the agency that the DSS Committee recommended and is working with them in finalizing the correct figures and (2) he has also met with the supervisors of the Child Support Enforcement agency and they are considering submitting a proposal for providing these services. Mr. Martin expects to bring it to the Commissioners for a vote the first meeting in April.

MOTION: Commissioner Faircloth moved to adjourn.  
SECOND: Commissioner Edge  
VOTE: Unanimous

MEETING ADJOURNED